DPH Announces COVID-19 $15M Testing Partnership With Quidel In Schools

Dover (July 19, 2021) The Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing a $15M partnership with the Department of Education (DOE) and Quidel Corporation to provide comprehensive COVID-19 testing, processing, and reporting in Delaware schools. Quidel will utilize its rapid antigen tests to provide on-the-spot results in as little as 10 minutes. Frequent testing helps immediately identify COVID-19 cases, prevent transmission, and keep schools open.

While the availability of testing in schools is not new in Delaware, this service, which is free to schools and staff, is a complete turn-key solution that includes providing Quidel staff to conduct on-site testing, analyze results and report them to families and the State, taking the burden off of schools. Results are reported back to families within 24 hours.

"When used alongside other prevention strategies, like distancing and face masks, testing creates an additional level of reassurance that it is safe to keep schools open," said DPH Chief Physician Dr. Rick Pescatore. "This program allows schools the best of both worlds, being able to identify potential cases early while continuing to focus on the business of learning."

Screening testing continues to be an important mitigation strategy, which was again recommended in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recently updated Guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools.

"Antigen testing facilitates our quick identification of cases, which in turn will help keep our classrooms open to in-person learning," said Secretary of Education Susan Bunting. "I appreciate the ongoing support of the Division of Public Health in ensuring that our schools remain open and safe for both students and staff."

DPH, DOE, and Quidel have already launched the initiative at five pilot schools, for their summer school students and staff. Three participating schools are in the Colonial School District, one in the Christina School District and Odyssey Charter School. Quidel can expand the program to all 350 of the State's K-12 public, private and charter schools when classrooms fully reopen for the fall semester. Under the program, parental permission is required for students to participate.

This testing service is meant to be a routine process that is aimed at testing asymptomatic staff and students. Staff and students who have symptoms of COVID-19 are reminded to stay home and seek testing at one of Delaware's available sites which can be located at de.gov/gettested. Quidel and DPH will coordinate follow-up testing and results reporting for any student who receives a positive result from the rapid antigen test.

"Quidel is proud to partner with the State of Delaware in the development and launch of this comprehensive testing protocol to support the State's safe reopening of classrooms and efforts to protect students and school staff," said Douglas Bryant, president, and CEO of Quidel Corporation. "Vigilance in testing is the surest way to detect COVID-19 infections early and a crucial tool to help limit potential spread. Every day that we shut coronavirus down will be a day that we keep Delaware classrooms open."

Schools and families that want to learn more about the program can visit: https://www.dhsscovidschooltest.com/. Questions about testing can also be directed to DPH Richard.Pescatore@delaware.gov.

If you are sick with any of the following symptoms, stay home: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, chills, shaking with chills, loss of smell or taste, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or headache or congestion or runny nose without a known cause such as allergies.

Medically related questions regarding testing, symptoms, and health-related guidance can be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.